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AUTHOR Lifton, Peter D.
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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a theoretical framework of moral and immoral development which considers not only reasoning, but also behavior and situational variables. Major theories of moral development proposed by Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, Haan, and Hogan are used to illustrate the notion that, although empirical evidence shows that most individuals possess the potential for both moral and immoral expression, no theorist has been able to systematically incorporate the construct of immorality within his model. The components of the proposed model are discussed according to major structural components of earlier theories of moral development, and the way each moral type is identical to its equivalent immoral type with respect to reasoning and is the mirror-image of its equivalent immoral type with respect to action. Individual differences in development are explained by personality variables (socialization, empathy, autonomy), ego processes (coping, defending, fragmenting), and situational determinants. An assessment of the theory is discussed in terms of its applicability to actual rather than hypothetical moral dilemmas. (Author/NRB)

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TOWARD A THEORY OF MORAL AND IMMORAL DEVELOPMENT

Peter D. Lifton

University of California - Berkeley

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Toward a Theory of Moral and Immoral Development

In 1976, an article concerned with students' cheating in college courses appeared in a major national magazine. The following is an excerpt:

A student, totally unprepared for his exam in Chinese history, labelled his blue book 'Number Two,' wrote a single grandiloquent concluding paragraph and handed it in. The professor later apologized for losing blue book 'Number One' and gave the student a 'B'. (Time, 6/7/76)

Consider also the following brief description of the February, 1980 prison riot at the New Mexico State Penitentiary:

A small group of inmates - perhaps fewer than a dozen - went on a rampage of brutal torture and murder. Most of their victims were in Cell Block 4, which housed suspected informers and others with reason to fear violence from fellow inmates. According to survivors, the 'execution squad' doused some men with gasoline and set them on fire; others were hacked to death with homemade knives. Members of the squad killed one prisoner with a blowtorch, holding him before a window in full view of the law-enforcement officers and National Guardsmen who had gathered outside the 15 foot prison fence. (Time, 2/18/80)

Both instances clearly describe violations of moral codes. Yet, the extent and type of each moral violation is quite different. The first violates the code of honesty; the second, the sanctity of human life. How would present theories of moral development classify the actions of the people involved in each situation? Surprisingly, most major theories would be unable to make such a differentiation for two reasons. First, most theories classify people with respect to moral reasoning, not behavior (Lifton, 1980). Second, as its name implies, research on moral development studies morality. This presumes that all human reasoning and action is moral. However, as these two previous excerpts vividly illustrate, individuals exist within societies whose behaviors and reasoning patterns are not moral

(eg: juvenile delinquents, common criminals, terrorists). In addition, seemingly "moral" individuals at times may exhibit immoral reasoning or behavior (eg: cheating on income tax). Similarly, "immoral" individuals can exhibit moral reasoning or behavior (eg: several guards at the New Mexico prison were saved by the inmates). Specifically then, the realm of moral development research must be expanded to include not only morality, but also immorality. Additionally, such research must include the assessment not only of reasoning, but also behavior as well as situations.

I intend to propose a theoretical framework of moral and immoral development. Before describing such a framework, however, it is necessary to briefly review some major theories of moral development.

Freud's theory of the superego was the first comprehensive attempt to explain morality from a psychological perspective. He perceived humans as innately hostile, immoral, and in constant conflict with both civilized society (reality) and themselves (id). In order for both the individual and society to survive, the rules and values of society needed to be internalized via the successful resolution of the Oedipal conflict. Freud therefore considered morality to be highly constrictive and controlling in nature, repressing the innate sexual and aggressive tendencies of the individual person (Freud, 1923, 1930).

Piaget conceptualized morality as a component of the child's overall intellectual, logical, and cognitive development. Morality, like other cognitive functions, was a means at the child's disposal for solving problems (moral dilemmas) through accommo-

dation and assimilation. Morality was not as much a mechanism of control as it was a means for the child to better solve the conflicts of the real-world. Thus, for Piaget, morality was a cognitive process which prepared the individual for successful social interactions with other persons, with society in general, and ultimately with oneself (Piaget, 1932).

Kohlberg extended the work of Piaget by stating that although morality followed a sequence of cognitive and logical development, this development did not end in early adolescence but instead continued into early adulthood. Morality, operationally defined by six stages (five as of 1978), was based upon certain universal principles of ethics. These principles existed independently of individual people or societies and hence, by definition, were cross-cultural and trans-historical. Thus, morality for Kohlberg was defined as the revelation to the individual of these universal principles which, in turn, guided the moral reasoning of all cultures and societies (Kohlberg, 1969, 1976, 1978).

Unlike Piaget and Kohlberg, Haan viewed morality as more than simply a cognitive skill; it was instead by nature an intrapsychic social skill. In fact, its very purpose was the facilitation of social interactions. Successful social interactions ("moral dialogues"), however, were often impeded by the inherent stresses present in the situation. Thus, the ego's ability to deal with stress via either coping, defending, or fragmenting was inextricably related to the achievement of morality by the individual (Haan, 1977, 1978, Note 1).

For Hogan, humans were by nature and necessity social beings. In order to survive, they had to band together into groups; in

order for these groups to survive, a set of codified rules and principles had to be developed or, in other words, a moral code. Three personality characteristics guided the formation and maintenance of the group's (a/k/a society's) moral code. These were socialization, empathy, and autonomy. Thus, although the need for morality originated in the evolutionary nature of humans, the attainment and maintainment of a moral code was a consequence of personality variables (Hogan, 1973, 1978).

Each of these theories recognized to varying degrees the existence of immoral reasoning and/or behavior. No theorist, however, systematically incorporated the construct of immorality within his or her model. Yet countless studies, ranging from Hartshorne & May (1930) and MacKinnon (1938) in the 1930s, to Glueck & Glueck (1960) and Milgram (1963) in the 1960s, to Bandura (1973) and Klass (1978) in the 1970s have demonstrated the capability of apparently moral individuals to commit immoral acts. Of equal importance were the recent findings of Emler (1978) and Jurkovic (1980) which indicated the capacity for moral reasoning by immoral individuals.

Therefore, the empirical evidence seems readily available to support the position that most individuals possess the potential, if not the need, for moral and immoral expression. What is not available is a theoretical framework within which to place this evidence. The remainder of this talk will be concerned with the presentation of such a framework, using as its basis major structural components of the previously described theories of moral development.

Immoral development, like moral development, can be characterized by a series of types (T_1 to T_6 for morality, $-T_1$ to $-T_6$ for immorality; see Figure 1). It is important to note two features of the model. First, each structural unit constitutes a type of reasoning pattern, behavior, or situation, not a stage. Therefore, inherent value judgments are not implied because each type of reasoning and behavior is as equally effective for its corresponding situation as any other type. Second, each moral type is identical to its equivalent immoral type in structure; that is, with respect to reasoning. However, each moral type is the mirror-image of its equivalent immoral type in process; that is, with respect to action. For example, the predominant reasoning pattern governing the T_4 individual's behavior is concern for the welfare of others (empathy) and maintainment of the social order (socialization). The $-T_4$ individual uses an identical set of criterion. However, while the T_4 person values empathy and socialization, the $-T_4$ person possesses no similar value system.

Consider the behavior of the previously described "execution squad" at the New Mexico State penitentiary. A prison in many respects resembles a family. Loyalty and trust among fellow inmates are highly valued, much like such loyalties and trusts are valued among family members (T_3 reasoning). The breaking of these trusts, that is informing on your fellow prisoners, is not. Concern for others as well as living up to social expectations are also not valued ($-T_3$ reasoning). The brutal murders that the "squad" committed were only against those individuals who violated the inmates' moral code. They killed only informers, only

those individuals who violated the unwritten trusts and loyalties. Thus, the situation, behavior, and reasons behind the behavior would be classified as $-T_3$.

This example describes quite vividly two important aspects of the model. First, it demonstrates how immoral behavior and reasoning can be classified and, more importantly, differentiated from moral behavior and reasoning. Second, it illustrates the convoluted nature of morality and immorality. The behavior of the "execution squad" could be explained by (1) their lack of concern for others as well as social rules and expectations ($-T_3$) but also by (2) their belief in the maintainment of trusts and loyalties (T_3). Thus, some aspects of their behavior were guided by a "moral code," other aspects by an equivalent "immoral code."

As a second example, consider the difference between a student who takes an exam in an honest manner versus the student who cheats on an exam. Both students are concerned with serving their own needs (that is, passing the exam) but the former maintains the implicit "deal" or "contract" with the university, the latter does not. The reasoning patterns are similar (T_2); the resultant actions are quite different (T_2 vs. $-T_2$).

In short, how different is the "caring father" from the "abusive father?" the Exxon oil executive from the political terrorist? the democratic president from the autocratic dictator? They certainly diverge with respect to action, but not necessarily with respect to reasoning.

What then determines whether or not a person will act in a moral or immoral manner? A partial answer can be drawn from two of the previously described moral theories.

Using Hogan's model, individual differences with respect to moral and immoral actions can be explained via three personality dimensions. The morally mature individual has developed a sense of socialization, empathy, and autonomy; the immorally mature individual lacks these three dimensions. Therefore, the corporate executive differs from the terrorist with respect to socialization and empathy. The executive strives to preserve the corporate structure (a/k/a society) as well as the welfare of fellow employees. The terrorist, on the other hand, attempts to destroy the social structure as well as harm other persons. The executive is thus high on socialization and empathy; the terrorist is low on these two dimensions. However, as previously indicated, morality and immorality are convoluted. Thus, there are also "ruthless businessmen" who preserve the corporate structure at all costs (HiSo, LoEm) and "political terrorists" who destroy government buildings but provide prior warnings to allow people to vacate the buildings (LoSo, HiEm).

Using Haan's model, individual differences can be explained with respect to ego processes. The morally mature individual uses coping mechanisms (eg: sublimation, suppression) which are effective and realistic means for dealing with situations. The immorally mature individual uses fragmentation mechanisms (eg: preoccupation, depersonalization) which are ineffective and unrealistic ego processes. The morally and immorally immature individuals use defense mechanisms (eg: displacement, repression) which are moderately effective and realistic. In short, the corporate executive copes, the terrorist fragments.

Individual differences can also be explained with respect

to situations. Types of morality and immorality represent strategies for dealing with the demands of the situation. Hence, they can be elicited by the situation; that is, certain situations "pull" for certain types of reasoning and behavior. A mature individual can (1) recognize which type of reasoning and behavior is maximally defined by the situation and then (2) produce that type of thought and action. Situations can therefore be classified with respect to their moral or immoral type in the same manner as reasoning patterns and behavior. For example, military situations typically "pull" for T_1 thoughts and actions (eg: blind obedience to authority), school for T_2 (eg: serving one's own needs by making fair deals), and family for T_3 (eg: keeping trusts and loyalties).

The development of one type of morality or immorality does not assume the extinction of other types of reasoning or actions from the individual's respective cognitive or behavioral domains. Instead, all types once attained remain accessible. Moral or immoral maturity is not defined as the attainment of the highest (or lowest) type (as in the respective Kohlberg, Haan, and Hogan systems). Instead, maturity is defined as the possession and effective utilization of a repertoire of types.

Thus, in order to competently respond to the demands of a variety of social situations, an individual needs to possess a range of moral or immoral types. This "need for competence" (White, 1959) constitutes the motivation component of the model.

Two brief and final points. First, not all reasoning or behavior is moral or immoral. A small number of people subscribe to no personal sense of right and wrong. Such individuals are

typically labelled as sociopathic. Second, assessment within this model must be conducted within the context of actual, real-world moral and immoral situations. The extensive use of hypothetical moral dilemmas and games by prior moral researchers has contributed greatly to the apparent gap between moral reasoning and moral action, and to the subsequent lack of predictive and construct validity. Hypothetical dilemmas elicit hypothetical responses. Only by examining actual responses to actual dilemmas can researchers hope to understand the true nature of moral and immoral development.

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Footnote

Requests for reprints should be sent to Peter D. Lifton,
Department of Psychology, 3210 Tolman Hall, University of Cali-
fornia, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Figure 1

FRAMEWORK OF MORAL AND IMMORAL DEVELOPMENT

	Type	Reasoning Pattern (Kohlberg)	Personality Structure (Hogan)	Ego Process (Haan)	Type of Situation	Type of Person
MORALITY	T ₆	-right is following universal ethical principles.	↑ Autonomy	↑	Utopia	Christ
	T ₅	-right is upholding basic laws of society, except those that infringe on individual rights.	↓ ↑	↑	Constitutional Government	president
	T ₄	-right is doing one's duty in society, upholding the social order, and the welfare of the group.	↑ Empathy	↑ Coping	Business Corporation	corporate executive
	T ₃	-right is being concerned for others, keeping the loyalty and trust of others, living up to social expectations.	↓	↓	Family	husband/ father
	T ₂	-right is serving one's own needs and making fair deals.	↑ Social-ization	↑	School	student
	T ₁	-right is blind obedience to rules and authority, avoiding punishment and physical harm.	↓	↓ Defense	Military	soldier
AMORALITY	T ₀	-questions of right and wrong are personally irrelevant.			Type of Behavior	sociopath
IMMORALITY	-T ₁	-right is disobedience of rules and authority; no fear of punishment or physical harm.	↑ Lack of Social-ization	↑ Defense	petty crimes	juvenile delinquent
	-T ₂	-right is serving one's own needs by making unfair or personally expedient deals.	↓	↓	fraud	con artist

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Figure 1 (con't)

Type	Reasoning Pattern (Kohlberg)	Personality Structure (Hogan)	Ego Process (Haan)	Type of Behavior	Type of Person
-T ₃	-right is breaking trusts and loyalties; failing to keep promises and agreements	↑	↑	assault/ battery	wife/child abuser
-T ₄	-right is destroying social order and structure.	Lack of Empathy	↑	sabotage	terrorists
-T ₅	-right is upholding those laws which serve oneself at the ex- pense of others.	↑ Lack of Autonomy	Fragment- ation	Machiavellian rule	dictator
-T ₆	-right is failing to respect universal ethics.	↓ ↓ ↓	↓	annihilation	Satan

(4/80; rev. 11/80, 3/81)